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# Levinas NC

To negate means “**to deny the truth of**” which implies **a)** that you presume neg since negating has no positive connotation and permissibility negates and **b)** that indicting assumptions negates since it denies the fact that the resolution can be true by making it logically incoherent.

The **standard** is **respecting the alterity of the Other**.

1. I experience the world as radically beyond my comprehension and having meaning from a multitude of perspectives. These other perspectives defined by being not-mine, so I have an obligation to respect them – I cannot justify anything else since the nature of the other is always beyond my experience. **Blum[[1]](#footnote-1)**

The experience of transcendence is, at bottom, the experience of having my interiority brought into question ontologically, epistemologically, and morally. Ontologically, I find that I am not the only possible source of reality. Although I am capable of creating, I experience a presence within the world that so overflows and escapes from my experience that I could not have created it. Epistemologically, I find that my perspective on the world is not the only possible [one] perspective. There is a point of view that I can never occupy, because the only way of defining it relative to my point of view is that it is not mine. Because the Other so radically escapes my cognition, it simultaneously threatens my freedom (to such a degree that I am inclined to murder) and awakens my desire (to such a degree that I am inclined to awe, and even to worship). The Other is at once the mysterium tremendum and the mysterium fascinans. If morality is understood as arising in the context of sociation, then the insight that the limits of my understanding become apparent precisely in this context would seem necessarily to have moral implications. Inasmuch as the Other fundamentally escapes my understanding, the forced totalization of the Other murder, in the extreme case is an imposition of my will for which a justification is, in principle, unavailable. As Levinas puts it, murder is impossible- not physically speaking, of course, but morally speaking (Levinas 1961/1969, 198-99). If I kill someone, it is fundamentally because I wish to be rid of the limits that are imposed by his or her presence. The cognitive and moral limits that are illuminated by the face, however, are not eliminated by removing the face from the purview of sensibility. The infinite distance between myself and the Other, once opened in my experience by the Other's epiphany, will remain open. My responsibility, once illuminated, is seen as a part of what I am. The commandment that was initially inscribed on the face of the Other is now inscribed on the heart of the same.19 "To be an I means . . . not to be able to escape responsibility. . . . The uniqueness of the I is the fact that no one can answer for me"(97).

And, outweighs other framework warrants: **A.** I deny the empirical belief that the other is like yourself, so they can’t justify the generalization of particular reasons in an ethical context. I contest a critical presupposition of their framework link chain and derivation of any system of duties

**B.** My framework identifies the phenomenological basis of agency – if you aren’t culpable for what you do, then you aren’t morally accountable at all. That condition is satisfied only by your distinction from the Other, so my framework derives offense from a prior question

2. **Phenomenology** – every claim makes a presumption that your consciousness has a right to postulate itself and proceed in the world, but never justifies that. This precludes all arguments that deal with the question of ethics, or what is “due” to whom since you can only be due something if you exist rightfully at all. That only makes sense if you are heteronomously bound. **Levinas**[[2]](#footnote-2)

**One has to respond to one’s right to be, not by** referring to **some abstract** and anonymous **law**, or judicial entity, **but because of one’s fe**ar for the Other. My **being-in-the-world** or my ‘place in the sun’, my being at home, **have** these not also **been the usurpation of spaces belonging to the other** man **whom I have already** oppressed or starved, or **driven out** into a third world; are they not acts of repulsing, excluding, exiling, stripping, killing? Pascal’s ‘my place in the sun’ marks the beginning of the image of the usurpation of the whole earth. **A fear for all the violence and murder my existing might generate**, in spite of its conscious and intentional innocence. A fear which reaches back past my ‘self-conciousness’ in spite of whatever moves are made towards a bonne conscience by a pure perseverance in being. It is the fear of occupying someone else’s place with the Da of my Dasein; it is the inability to occupy a place, a profound utopia.

I contend that living wage laws are inconsistent with the standard.

1. The living wage uniquely mandates a conception of the good life for all agents, which doesn’t respect their nature as infinitely distant from your perspective.

**A. Contracting:** Aff defines the conditions of fair contract – reinforces the government conception as an absolute constraint on individuals and enforces a definition of exploitation for them that stops them from doing what they want to based whether it’s acceptable to the government.

**B.** **Life Requirements:** A living wage identifies necessity, security and comfort for the other universally when these are subjective considerations. Employees don’t get to decide what comforts are essential to their lives, they are made to allow the government to do so.

*Counterplan doesn’t link – the government is free to develop its conception of the good life, it just can’t impose it on other agents. You can take the basic income or not, whereas wage requirements restrict what you can do.*

2. Making obligations into a concrete set of rules is inconsistent with the standard:

**A. Responsiveness:** when you follow a rule for its own sake, you don't do it for the Other, and so it effaces then - you're not responding to their alterity. The rule mandates your action, so you're acting either out of some intrinsic value placed on obedience or fear of legal sanction, which is self interested, not transcending the ego.

**B. Limitation:** codifying your responsibility into a strict rule limits your obligation to that mandate and enforces it regardless of the specific nature of your relation to the other. That's inconsistent with obligations stemming from the face of the Other, since the way you respond is already determined for you and limited by categories present in your experience but not necessarily theirs.

Thus a mandatory framework doesn’t leave room for real responsibility. **Mansell[[3]](#footnote-3)**

The more flexible a set of rules can be, such as the voluntary codes and principles used by business, the more chance will exist for aligning these rules with a sense of responsibility for the Other. This requirement for flexibility is explained by Levinas’s argument that our responsibility for the Other can never be set along one fixed dimension. So, paradoxically perhaps, whilst the sort of ethical codes used by business can serve as an escape from real responsibility, they can at the same time (through their flexible and voluntary nature) offer the possibility for a degree of alignment with responsibility that a mandatory framework cannot capture. Directors have, under the UK Combined Code of 2003 (which I mention only as an example) the choice to comply with the principles in the code, or explain why they have deviated from them. Likewise, an employee who is supposedly subject to the ‘ethical code’ of the business will almost always have room for a flexible interpretation of what this means in any given context, and be able to apply what Aristotle (1980) calls ‘practical wisdom’. There is a chance that in the space left open by this flexibility, principles can be adhered to that do reflect a genuine openness of responsibility.

CP meets – Functions as a de facto floor and coopts the entirety of the aff advantages without a requirement on employers. **Yglesias ‘13[[4]](#footnote-4)**

A GBI helps people by giving them money, obviously. It also serves as a kind of de facto minimum wage, since if people can earn money doing nothing, in practice you're going to need to offer them higher pay to get them to work. But it's much more flexible than a minimum wage. In a GBI world, an employer has to make work somehow appealing enough to get employees even though everyone's guaranteed a basic minimum whether they work or not. But that "appealing" factor could be high wages, could be valuable skills and training, could just be a pleasant work atmosphere, or could be some combination of the three. Current minimum wage policies sort of try to achieve these goals by having exemptions for educationally rewarding internships or vocational programs. But these exemptions manage to be simultaneously too prone to abuse and too inflexible to capture the full range of possible scenarios that arise in human life.

# Framework Interactions

## Generic

1. I establish ethics as first philosophy, prior to any derivation, so no codified rule can function. By the time an agent exists to reflect and develop a universal moral precept it is heternomously bound to the Other. A subject can only exist after it’s named by the Other, so they’re already obligated to the AC. This is a prior question. **Nealon[[5]](#footnote-5)**

For Levinas, on the other hand, if one is to be an ethical subject, one must escape the dark, anonymous rumbling of Being; in order for there to be a subjectivity responsive to the other, there must be a hypostasis that lifts the subject out of its wallowing in the Solipsistic raw Materiality of the il y a. Out of the “there is” of anonymous being, there must rise a “Here I Am.” [me voici] that nonetheless retains the trace of the hesitation and debt -- what Levinas will call the "passivity" -- characteristic of the il y a's impossibility. As he writes, hypostasis is subject-production, the introduction of space or place into the anonymous murmur of being: "to be conscious is to be torn away from the there is" (E&E, p. 60/98). Subjectivity is torn away from the anonymity of the there is by a responding to the other that is not reducible to any simple rule-governed or universalizing code; the ethical subject is, in other words, a responding, site-specific performative that is irreducible to an ontological or transhistorical substantive. As Levinas writes, “the body is the very advent of consciousness. It is nowise a thing -- not only because a soul inhabits it, but because its being belongs to the order of events and not to that of substantives. It is not posited; it is a position. It is not situated in space given beforehand; it is the irruption in anonymous being of localization itself. . . . The body as subjectivity does not express an event; it is itself this Event. (E&E, pp. 71,72/122,124)” This is perhaps the most concise statement of Levinas's understanding of a subjectivity that rises out of the il y a through hypostasis: the subject comes about through a performative response to the call of the other, through the bodily taking up of a "position," "the irruption in anonymous being of localization itself." However, this hypostasis is not the intentional act of a subject; it is, rather, subjection in and through the face-to-face encounter with the other person. As Levinas writes, "the localization of consciousness is not subjective; it is the subjectivization of the subject" (E&E, p. 69/118). Thus, "here I am" rises out of the there is as an accusative, where I am the object rather than the subject of the statement, where I am responding to a call from the face of the other. As Jan de Greef writes, "for Levinas the movement of subjectivity does not go from me to the other but from the other to me . . . . “Here I Am” (me voici) -- the unconditional of the hostage -- can only be said in response to an 'appeal' or a 'preliminary citation.' Convocation precedes invocation."16 It is to-the-other that one responds in the hypostasis that lifts the subject out of the il y a the face of the other, and its call for response-as-subjection, is the only thing that can break the subject's imprisonment in the anonymous il y a and open the space of continuing response to alterity. As Levinas sums up the project of his Existence and Existents, "it sets out to approach the idea of Being in general in its impersonality so as to then be able to analyze the notion of the present and of position, in which a being, a subject, an existent, arises in impersonal Being, through a hypostasis" (p. 19/18). As the evasion of the "impersonal being" that is the il y a hypostasis (as the concrete performative response to the face or voice of the other person) is the birth of the ethical Levinasian subject. Such a subjection to the other [which] makes or produces a subject at the same time that it unmakes any chance for the subject to remain an alienated or free monad. As Levinas writes, "The subject is inseparable from this appeal or this election, which cannot be declined" (OTB, p. 53/68), so the subject cannot be thematized in terms of alienation from some prior state of wholeness; in Levinasian subjectivity, there is an originary interpellating appeal of expropriation, not an originary loss of the ability to appropriate.

2. **Phenomenology**: the perspective of your consciousness means directly “seeing” yourself is impossible and begs the question: if you could do that, it wouldn’t be you perceiving anymore. Only being called by another agent can ground your experience of your status as as receptive to moral claims, so my framework is the only possible starting point.

## AT Consequentialism

1. **Incomperability** – Different pleasures are different – eating chocolate vs sleeping, for example and there’s no objective value you can measure because the the benefit is experiential. No other agent but the one eating the chocolate knows what it feels like for that agent, and if you don’t like chocolate it can be net bad. Impacts: **A.** prefer the neg framework – accounts for the specific experiences of other agents and doesn’t assume a notion of the good that’s flawed even if you can know the other **B.** No offense under util – can’t know if an action is actually good for agents without engaging with them specifically
2. **Aggregation Fails:** There’s no simple way to weigh pain and pleasure: not all are equivalent because there’s no meta-actor that experiences the sum-total. Means ethics that impact back to a logical law or an experience without an experiencer can’t be normative. The NC solves because it grounds obligation on your relation to a real Other, not an abstract principle
3. **Subjectivity of the Good**: Ssome people think dishonor is worse than death, even if it’s not more painful. There’s a higher level of reasoning going that couldn’t be tracked even if pleasure and pain were normative for each agent – that’s the reason masochism is possible. The NC preserves the ability to pursue the good life, but the AC does not
4. AC makes presuppositions about the structure of the Other’s consciousness that can’t be justified: you perceive their action but can’t understand their cognition, which means your reasons can bind you but can’t bind the other. Agency itself is a description of a set of phenomena that you associate with yourself but since you see only the face of the other and no deeper, you can’t assume that defines them.

## AT Kantianism

1. NC makes presuppositions about the structure of the Other’s consciousness that can’t be justified: you perceive their action but can’t understand their cognition, which means your reasons can bind you but can’t bind the other. Agency itself is a description of a set of phenomena that you associate with yourself but since you see only the face of the other and no deeper, you can’t assume that defines them.
2. You can’t have a priori moral truths since there isn’t an a priori subject: since you’re only capable of moral reasoning after engagement with the Other, your understanding is dependent on that interaction and thus are contingent and not necessary. You could also never verify that any truth claims are a priori since other perspectives are not-yours by definition, that’s Blum.
3. The AC framework is based on the form and the content of the will, but the will itself only exists *after* your interaction with the other. Seeing their face is what identifies you as an agent, since it establishes you as someone who has responsibility for something – the will is heteronomous not autonomous.

# Substantive Frontlines

## Totalization Weighing

### Weighing

Deosn’t matter if you win the AC framework, my impact outweighs: no ethical theory can justify or outweigh totalization impacts because they presume nontotalization in engaging in normative reasoning. **Beavers[[6]](#footnote-6)**

If we can accept this notion that ideas are inventions of the mind, that ideas are, when it comes down to it, only interpretations of something, and if ethics, in fact, is taken to refer to real other persons who exist apart from my interpretations, then we are up against a problem: there is no way in which ideas, on the current model, refer to independently existing other persons, and as such, ideas cannot be used to found an ethics. There can be no pure practical reason until after contact with the other is established. Given this view towards ideas, then, anytime I take the person in my idea to be the real person, I have closed off contact with the real person; I have cut off the connection with the other that is necessary if ethics is to refer to real other people. This is a central violence to the other that denies the other his/her own autonomy. Levinas calls this violence "totalization" and it occurs whenever I limit the other to a set of rational categories, be they racial, sexual, or otherwise. Indeed, it occurs whenever I already know what the other is about before the other has spoken. That is, it is the inscription of the other in the same. If ethics presupposes the real other person, then such totalization will, in itself, be unethical.

1. Blum, Peter C. "Overcoming Relativism? Levinas's Return to Platonism." Journal of Religious Ethics 28.1 (2000): 91-117. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Levinas, Emmanuel. *The Levinas Reader*. “Ethics as First Philosophy” Ed. Sean Hand. Trans. Sean Hand and Michael Temple. Oxford: Blackwell, 1989. Print. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Mansell, Samuel. "Proximity and Rationalisation: Reflections on the Limits of a Levinasian Ethics in the context of Corporate Governance." [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Yglesias, Matthew [executive editor of Vox and author of The Rent Is Too Damn High], “EITC Isn't The Alternative to a Minimum Wage, This Is” (2013) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Nealon, Jeffrey Thomas. "'Junk'and the Other: Burroughs and Levinas on Drugs." Postmodern Culture 6.1 (1995). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Beavers, Anthony. "Introducing Levinas to undergraduate philosophers." Colloquy paper, Undergraduate Philosophy Association, University of Texas. Austin (1990). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)